

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are pending.

A minor change to the Specification for clarity has been made. No new issues have been presented.

Remarks relating to Interview with the Examiner regarding the section “Response to Arguments”

The Examiner is thanked for discussing reasons why the Advisory Action indicates that the subject Reply would not be entered. The following further remarks are provided based on the recent telephone discussion.

The Examiner expressed that the Reply was not entered because it is still his position that the term “integrally disposed” can be interpreted very broadly. The Examiner repeated that he is relying on a dictionary definition of “integral” as “essential to completeness.” Applicants submit that the chosen definition is not consistent with the specification and claims of the present invention. It has been held that the terms in the claim must at least be interpreted in a manner consistent with the present specification, In re Hyatt, 211 F.3d 1367, 1372, 54 USPQ2d 1664, 1667 (Fed. Cir. 2000). see M.P.E.P. § 2111.

The dictionary definition of “integral” chosen by the examiner pertains to a single “essential” feature. Claim 1, on the other hand, relates to a combination of elements as being “integrally disposed.” In particular, the claim recites, “wherein the sheet separating means and the limiting means are integrally disposed,” i.e., a combination of parts. This feature is derived from a section in the specification that discloses that the sheet pressing portion 87 and the sheet

aligning portion 88 are formed from the same member (at page 43). Thus, Applicants submit that even if a dictionary definition were to be the primary source for the meaning of the term, a more appropriate definition that would be considered consistent with the claims and specification is: “1c: formed as a unit with another part.”

Accordingly, Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection.

Reply to Rejections

First Rejection

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 6,000,689 (Furuki et al.), as set forth in Section 1 of the Office Action.

Claim 1, which is an independent claim, includes the feature that "the sheet separating means and the limiting means are integrally disposed."

Claims 2 and 3 were noted in the text of the rejection but did not appear in the heading of the rejection.

The rejection is based on an interpretation of the claim language that is inconsistent with the meaning attributed thereto by the present disclosure. As set forth in the specification, the sheet separating means and the limiting means are formed from the same member. Thus, as recited in the claim, they are “integrally disposed.” The interpretation set forth in the Office Action is inconsistent with this lexicon, as adopted by Applicant.

By the present submission, Applicant amends page 43 of the specification to clarify the meaning of this recitation. No new matter is added and no new issues are raised.

In Furuki, the sheet separating means and the limiting means of the sheet feeding apparatus are not integrally disposed but are separate from each other.

As each and every limitation of the claims is not specifically or inherently in the reference, a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 is not viable.

While the Examiner has added comments in response to arguments in Section 3 of the Office Action, the Applicants traverse of the Examiner's position is set forth below.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the claim under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Second Rejection

Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U. S. Patent No. 6,217,017 (Yamazaki).

As explained above, claim 1 includes the feature that "the sheet separating means and the limiting means are integrally disposed." This feature is not shown either specifically or inherently in Yamazaki.

The Examiner added comments as explained in reply to the first rejection are set forth below.

For the reasons set forth above, the Examiner is requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Claims 4-6

Claims 4-6 were objected to. These claims remain in dependent form as it is considered that the base or intervening claims are patentable.

CONCLUSION

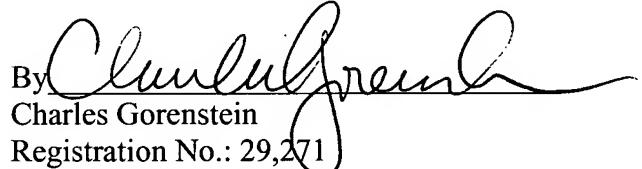
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Robert W. Downs (Reg. No. 48,222) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: February 14, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

RWD

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